



Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Distance Learning in Adult Basic Education

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Adult and Community Learning Services**

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I. Introduction

The primary purposes for Distance Learning are to:

- 1. Serve students in need of Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services using a blended / hybrid model in which students develop independent, self-study skills while having regular and frequent access to face-to-face learning and academic support services.**
- 2. Increase access to services for students on a waiting list; increase intensity for students currently enrolled in face-to-face classes; help students become college and career ready in order to reach one or more next steps, including transitioning into post-secondary education, becoming job ready, obtaining employment, and accessing occupational training.**

II. Community Adult Learning Center Participation

Community Adult Learning Centers (CALCs) are funded for either Distance Learning (DL) Option 1 or 2. This choice determines whether DL instruction is available exclusively at the Hub (Option 1) or whether DL instruction is available at the Hub **and** at the Community Adult Learning Center (Option 2).

- **Option 1**

- A minimum of 10 students served. All students receive DL instruction from the Hub. Eligible students may be enrolled in traditional face-to-face classes at the learning center (dual enrollment) or recruited from the waiting list or other referral sources.
- Learning Center offers an “Introduction to Distance Learning” course, on a frequent and ongoing basis, to introduce cohorts of distance learning students to the blended / hybrid model and the curriculum and supplemental materials; ensures that essential technology skills are in place; introduces social networking tools to allow students to experience and participate in a virtual community of learners; and supports the independent study skills necessary for persistence and success in online learning.
- Learning Center provides ongoing and regularly scheduled face-to-face support to distance learning students enrolled at the DL Hub.

- **Option 2**

- A minimum of 20 students served. A minimum of 10 students receive instruction from the learning center DL Coach, and a minimum of 10 students receive instruction from the instructional Hub. Eligible students may be enrolled in traditional face-to-face classes at the learning center (dual enrollment) or recruited from the waiting list or other referral sources.
- Learning Center offers an “Introduction to Distance Learning” course, on a frequent and ongoing basis, to introduce cohorts of distance learning students to the blended / hybrid model and the curriculum and supplemental materials; ensures that essential technology skills are in place; introduces social networking tools to allow students to

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- experience and participate in a virtual community of learners; and supports the independent study skills necessary for persistence and success in online learning.
- Learning Center provides ongoing and regularly scheduled face-to-face support to distance learning students receiving instruction from the learning center DL Coach and also to those students enrolled at the Hub.

Further responsibilities for Community Adult Learning Centers funded under **Integrated Distance Learning Option 1 and 2** are to:

1. Conduct outreach, recruitment, intake, enrollment and goal setting for all DL students.
2. Conduct pre- and post-testing in accordance with ACLS Assessment Policy and Procedures at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/>. The initial assessment may take place at the first or second face-to-face meeting.
3. Integrate distance learning prescreening into the adult learning center's established intake process (see <http://www.projectideal.org/publicationsresources/handbook.html> and DL research materials in Appendix C).
4. Obtain necessary release of information forms for all DL students.
5. Enter student participation data into SMARTT for all DL students in a timely manner and in accordance with the ACLS Statement of Assurances.
6. Follow up on student enrollment into distance learning to verify minimum required participation at the Instructional Hub.

III. Blended / Hybrid Model

ACLS supports a blended / hybrid model of distance learning that offers a combination of online instruction and face-to-face interactions. The features of the ACLS blended / hybrid model are based on the following key components:

- Regardless of where primary DL instruction occurs, all Option 1 and Option 2 programs must provide DL students with ongoing and regularly scheduled face-to-face interaction for instructional support. Support may include, but is not limited to individual tutoring, small group drop-in sessions (ESOL or GED subject areas), conversation groups for ESOL students, meetings at off-site locations, and other opportunities for group learning as needed.
- All programs must also collaborate with the DL Hub in supporting DL students. Such support includes, but is not limited to, identifying screening and orientation protocols; communicating areas of student need to the Hub; coordinating the schedule for assessment; delivering face-to-face instructional support that is tailored to the student's need; and developing and maintaining individual learning plans.

Student Participation

In order for students to move expeditiously toward their educational goals and next steps, students must commit to participate, on average, five hours per week or more on DL instructional product(s) and activities. Depending on the DL software product(s) used, student participation hours in the DL blended / hybrid model must be captured under both the proxy seat-time method and direct time method:

- **Proxy Seat Time:**
 - **Clock Time Model** - hours based on time a learner is engaged in a software program (curriculum) that tracks actual time on task.
 - **Learner Mastery Model** – fixed number of hours assigned for unit or lesson mastery based on passing a unit or lesson test.
- **Direct Time:**
 - Face-to-face supplemental instruction (tutoring, workshops)
 - Monitored lab instruction
 - Synchronous online instructor-led discussion, courses
 - Telephone conference call (teacher keeps a log that shows time and instructional topics discussed over the phone)
 - Live video broadcast to remote location (facilitator / teacher keeps a log)

Student Eligibility

ABE Students

Students must be 16 years of age or older, not enrolled in a secondary school.

- Dually enrolled students must have a scale score of at least 400 (GLE 6) in reading literacy as determined by the Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT).
- All other DL students must have a scale score of at least 500 (GLE 9) in reading literacy as determined by the Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT).

ESOL Students

Students must be 16 years of age or older, not enrolled in a secondary school.

- All DL students must have a scale score of at least 401 (SPL 2) as determined by the BEST Plus test or a scale score of at least 397 (SPL 2) as determined by the TABE Class-E.

IV. Instructional Hub

The Hub is the online instructional provider for students enrolled from both Option 1 and Option 2 Community Adult Learning Centers.

- The responsibilities of the Instructional Hub will be primarily to provide distance learning instruction, collaborate with the learning centers to identify screening and orientation protocols, and support learning centers in developing content for “Introduction to Distance Learning.”
- The Instructional Hub must provide instruction for 52 weeks per year, preferably through semester courses or structural/thematic units. DL instruction provided at the Hub should reflect a balance of short courses, group and individual instruction, and synchronous / asynchronous instruction. Individualized courses of study with time-defined boundaries may be developed based on students’ needs.

Further responsibilities of the Hub are to:

1. Provide instruction and academic support for all enrolled students.
2. Record student participation data into SMARTT according to proxy seat time and direct time reporting methods.

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3. Schedule post testing for all students at participating adult learning centers in accordance with ACLS assessment policies.
4. Provide instructional materials, access to curriculum, and supplemental materials to all students.
5. Establish and support a sense of community among learners through social networking platforms.
6. Participate in professional development opportunities for distance learning instruction through online forums, list-serv, webinars, etc., on a regular basis.

Staffing

It is recommended that the Instructional Hub employ 3-4 part-time distance learning teachers and maintain a monthly student load of approximately 135 DL students per Hub in FY13.

Programs are encouraged to combine part-time DL positions with classroom teaching time so that adding DL time will create FT or close to FT positions in the program, provided staff is trained and effective in distance learning instruction.

V. Distance Learning Curricula

ACLS has approved the following curricula for use in distance learning programs:

GED and pre-GED curricula:

- ◆ McGraw Hill Contemporary Pre-GED
- ◆ McGraw Hill Contemporary GED
- ◆ GEDi
- ◆ Skills Tutor
- ◆ eXtra Learning

ESOL curricula:

- ◆ English for All
- ◆ Rosetta Stone
- ◆ USA Learns
- ◆ Reading Horizons

ACLS encourages new programs to start with one curriculum product in their first year. Programs that would like to use an online curriculum product that is not on the list must contact ACLS to seek approval.

VI. Supplemental Instruction and Support

- Instruction utilizing supplemental materials must be aligned with appropriate Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks and reflect the diverse educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students served.
- Supplemental instructional materials should incorporate real-life “authentic” contexts that are responsive to the needs, skills, goals and interests of adult students in their roles as students, family members, members of the community and lifelong learners.

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VII. “Introduction to Distance Learning” for Students

The Instructional Hub and participating CALCs will collaborate to design an “Introduction to Distance Learning” course, to be provided by the CALC, to introduce and familiarize students with the blended / hybrid model used in Massachusetts. This class may count toward the 12 hours of required direct contact hours for student eligibility for federal reporting purposes. Please see Appendix C for a list of resources to support development of the course.

The components of the “Introduction to Distance Learning” course include:

- Introduction to the blended / hybrid model of distance learning as both a supplement to classroom instruction and as an independent mode of learning.
- Introduction and review of independent learning skills, time management, and communication skills.
- Training in the curriculum software and instruction in the curriculum product, including how to participate in and complete modules, communicate with the instructor, and ask for assistance.
- Introduction to computer skills necessary to work in the curriculum product, navigate the internet, use social networking platforms, and communicate via email.

At the conclusion of the “Introduction to Distance Learning” course, **all students** must enter into a written contract and commit to at least **five hours per week** for distance learning study and instruction. Student participation may be a combination of curriculum and supplementary materials as measured by proxy seat time hours and direct (synchronous) time.

VIII. Staff Development

All programs funded for distance learning are required to attend ACLS sponsored DL meetings and conferences.

Adult Learning Centers Option 1 and Option 2:

- At least two teachers must complete Project IDEAL DL 101 within the first year of participation in the project and be trained in curricula products used by the Hub.
- The DL instructor / coach must participate in regularly scheduled conference calls and webinars with the State DL Coordinator.
- The DL instructor / coach must attend the annual DL Summit.
- Learning centers are encouraged to utilize program and staff development resources to support the integration of distance learning.
- Learning centers are encouraged to provide access for all teachers to training in the approved curriculum product(s) in order to support the integration of distance learning.
- **DL Option 2 Programs only:**
 1. The distance learning instructor must be trained in the approved distance learning curriculum product(s) used by the program.
 2. In the second and subsequent years of the grant, the DL instructor must be trained in Project IDEAL DL 102, DL 103 and DL 104.

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Instructional Hub

All distance learning staff should participate in staff and professional development activities that are relevant to the needs of the program, community and students served.

Participation by DL Hub program staff in the following activities is required:

- Within the first year of the grant, all distance learning instructional staff must be trained in Project IDEAL DL 101.
- In the second and subsequent years of the grant, all distance learning instructional staff must be trained in Project IDEAL DL 102, DL 103 and DL104.
- All distance learning instructional staff must be trained in all approved distance learning curriculum products (ABE or ESOL).
- The DL Hub staff must participate in regularly scheduled conference calls and webinars with the State DL Coordinator.
- The DL Hub staff must attend the annual DL Summit.

IX. Required Matching Contribution and Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

Recipients of ABE grants must provide fully auditable matching resources equal to at least 20% of the grant award. In each subsequent year, including the first year of a new competition, the matching contribution must be equal to the amount contributed in the previous year, or 20% of the new grant amount, whichever is greater. The matching share committed in year one of a multi-year grant cannot be reduced without the Department's written approval. This is referred to as "maintenance of effort".

Matching Contribution Requirements

- Instructional and support services provided with matching funds must meet the "opportunity to learn standards" as outlined in the Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective ABE and the ABE Rates System.
- Matching resources must add value to program operations, instructional and support services.
- Matching resources must be fully documented, auditable and comprised of directly allocable (not indirect) costs.
- Grant applications and budget forms must identify the source or sources of matching funds.
- ESE requires that matching resources support the DL Hub. Funds that support any portion of services provided to distance learning students through the DL program are good examples of match that support the DL Hub. Local cash contributions such as local ABE appropriations from cities, towns and LEAs (local educational agencies) are an example of match if they support the DL Hub.
- The availability of existing computer hardware, telecommunications networks, video technology, and elements of a successful distance learning program through a matching contribution is preferred; however, these costs are also allowable as expenses to be charged to the grant.

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Appendix A – Sample Distance Learning Student Contract
Distance Learning Student Contract

(Last Name)

(First Name)

(Middle Initial)

The **(program name)** is a supportive community that encourages and assists students in pursuing educational, career, and higher education goals.

All individuals enrolling in distance learning will participate and complete “Introduction to Distance Learning” (DL-100).

Individuals must agree to adhere to the following terms in order to participate in the distance learning program.

- ◆ All students must complete all work in a timely and appropriate manner, a minimum of **five** hours of studying per week is required.
- ◆ Adhere to the Learning Center policies for computer usage.
- ◆ Maintain appointments with the instructor.
- ◆ Maintain weekly contact with the instructor by phone, email, or in person.
- ◆ Notify staff if you will be late for, or unable to keep appointments.
- ◆ Complete all assessments including all pre and post-tests.
- ◆ Return (if in possession of) all loaned software at the completion of the program and/or at the request of the adult learning center.

Check off if you agree to the following term:

☐ (optional) I agree to the use of photographs, videos, and quotations of me/or my child or ward (if under 18), in accounts or promotions of Distance Learning.

In signing this contract, you agree to accept the terms outlined above.

Student’s Signature

Date

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature (if student is under 18)

Date

Appendix B – Tools to Evaluate Teacher and Student Readiness for Distance Learning

The following link will connect you to the Project Ideal web site and the *Handbook of Distance Learning for Adult Learners, fourth edition* by Leslie Petty and Jerome Johnson, Project IDEAL Support Center at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. This document contains a number of resources to assist you in developing your plans for recruiting and teaching adults at a distance. Among these are:

- *Is On Line Learning for Me?* Page 64
- *Computer Skills Assessment for Teachers* Page 66

<http://projectideal.org>

Appendix C – Resource and Reference Materials

Distance Learning handbooks developed by the UMass Boston, Center for Social Policy, June 2009:

[Handbook of Screening, For Instructors and Administrators of Online ESOL Programs](#)

[Handbook of Screening, For Instructors and Administrators of Online GED Programs](#)

[Handbook of Support, For Instructors and Administrators of Online ESOL Programs, For Supporting Students for Persistence and Success](#)

[Handbook of Support, For Instructors and Administrators of Online GED Programs, For Supporting Students for Persistence and Success](#)

[Massachusetts Adult Basic Education and ESOL Distance Learning Programs: How to Assess Student Readiness for Distance Learning? Findings from the Pilot Screening Process](#)
[Distance Learning](#)

Appendix D – Glossary Terms for Distance Learning

<http://www.elearners.com/guide/faq-glossary/glossary/>

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